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CONTENTS

CONTEMPLATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 2
by Chiara Lubich

PRUDENCE AND JUSTICE 4
by John Paul II

WHEN THE ROOTS NEED TO GO DOWN DEEPER 7
by Juan de Yzaguirre Lopez

WORD OF LIFE 10
by Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES 11

THE FIRST SOCIAL ENCYCLICAL 14
by Igino Giordani

OTTMARING IS TEN YEARS OLD 17
by Karl-Heinz Fleckenstein

GALAXIES IN FLIGHT 20
by Piero Pasolini

FAMILY LIFE 23
by Lenny and Mary Szczesniak

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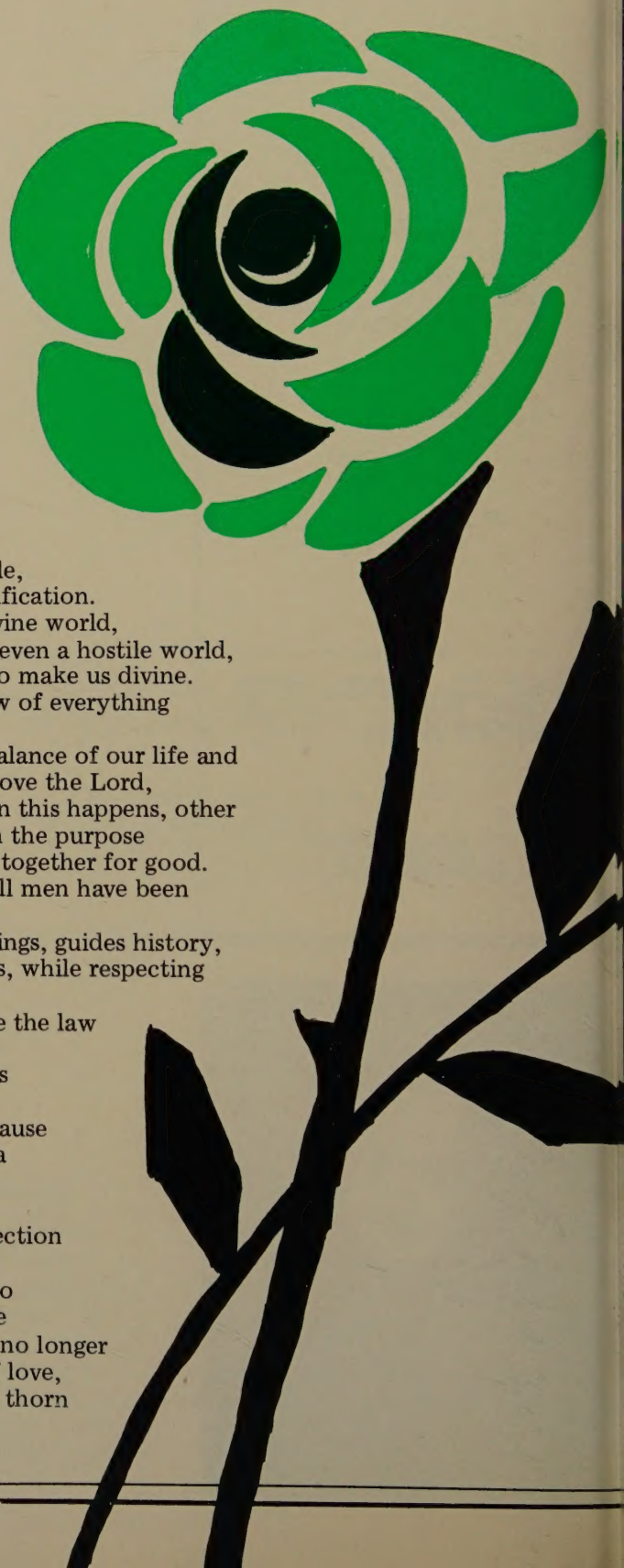
NO THORN WITHOUT A ROSE



How sad to think that the lives of many people are simply not lived! They do not live because they do not see; and they do not see because they look at the world, at things, at their families, at men, with their own eyes; whereas, to *see*, we should follow every event, every thing, every man, with the eyes of God. We truly see if we graft ourselves in God and, recognizing Him as Love, believe in this love and reason like the saints: "Everything that God wills or permits is for my santification." Joy and grief, birth and death, anguish and exultation, failure and triumph, encounters, acquaintances, work, sickness, unemployment, wars and plagues, a child's smile, a mother's love, everything is raw material for our sanctification. Around us moves a world of many different values; a divine world, an angelic world, a world of brotherhood, a lovable and even a hostile world, which have all been prepared by God for our true end, to make us divine. Everyone has a central role in this world, because the law of everything is love.

We must love in order to ensure the divine and human balance of our life and to carry out the will of the Most High. We must always love the Lord, our brothers, what God wills and what God allows. When this happens, other people, whether they know it or not, live their lives with the purpose of loving us. Indeed, for those who love, all things work together for good. Often, being blind and unbelieving, we do not see how all men have been created as a gift to us, and we as a gift to others.

But it is so. A mysterious bond of love links men and things, guides history, and orders the destiny both of individuals and of nations, while respecting their freedom to the full.

When a soul, abandoned in God, has for some time made the law of "believing in love" its own, God shows Himself.

With a new insight the soul realizes that every trial brings a harvest of new fruits, every struggle a victory, every tear a new smile, which is constantly renewed, because God is Life, who permits agony and evil for the sake of a greater good.

The soul understands that the life of Jesus does not culminate in the "via crucis" and in death, but in resurrection and ascension.

The human way of seeing things then fades. Bitterness no longer poisons the brief joys of this earthly life. Now the melancholy proverb "There is no rose without a thorn" no longer holds good; because we are involved in the revolution of love, to which God has attracted us, we can say: "There is no thorn without a rose."

by CHIARA LUBICH

Whether people speak well r ill of us, makes no real dif-erence. The one thing that im-overishes our life is vice; the one ning that adds to it is virtue.

n a hospital ward I once saw a an with a plaster cast. His chest nd right arm were in plaster. Vith his left hand he tried to do verything as best he could. The ast was a torture to him; but the eft arm, although it was tired ut by the end of the day, grew nore robust by doing twice its ormal work.

We are members of one anoth-r, and mutual service is our uty. Jesus did not merely advise s to serve one another, he com-anded us to do so.

When we help someone out of harity, let us not immediately ink ourselves saints. If our eighbor is powerless, we must elp him, and we must do so as ffectively as he would help him-elf, if only he could. Or else, vhat kind of Christians are we?

Have we remembered at least nce, to thank Mary for the gift of er own self, when she went through nbelievable suffering at the foot f the cross?

f we do not love, we have no ight.

If you love the cross, you have the light of God and you will be light for the world.

Jesus said, "I say to you further, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. Because where two or three meet in my name I will be there with them." It's not the number of peo-ple that counts, but their unity.

Simplicity consists in accept-ing all things as coming from God, and in offering all things to Him in return. Only if we do this can we call ourselves children in the Gospel sense.

The diameter of a tree's branches generally corresponds to the diam-eter of its roots. So also a soul is enlarged by the charity of Christ in proportion to the suffering it offers out of love.

God is close to one who suf-fers, but even closer to one who overcomes suffering with love.

When unity with the oth-ers becomes difficult, let us not break, but bend . . . until love works the miracle of one heart and one mind.

St. John of the Cross says that he who knows how to deny him-self covers more ground in a month than others, utilizing dif-ferent means, are able to cover in a much longer period.

To deny oneself . . . is an ex-pression that many dislike. They claim that it is not modern, not up-to-date, not open to reality.

If we examine the beauty of the numberless portraits of Mary painted by many artists in every century, we notice that they — many of them — remind us of paradise; they radiate a certain celestial serenity and beauty, like exquisitely harmonious gardens.

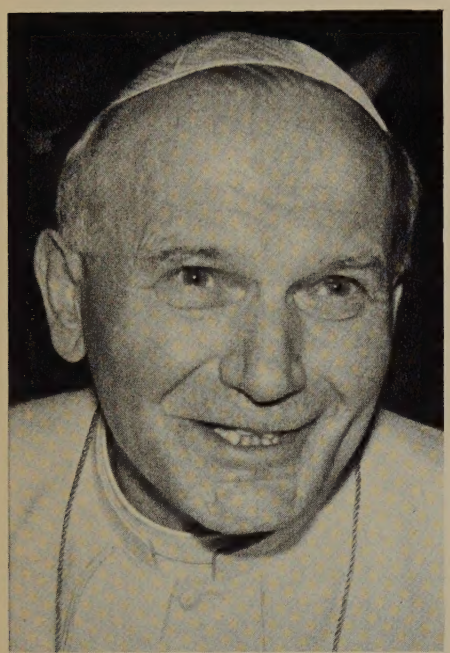
Yet Mary is precisely the pro-totype of those who have learned how to deny themselves.

Rather than analyze the way God inundates our soul with sweet-ness or allows it to sink into aridity, let us examine to what extent we succeed in doing God's will and in embracing the cross.

Love brings us together, unites us, makes us the people of God.

Prudence and Justice

Prudence and justice, fortitude and temperance were the themes developed by John Paul II in his first four general audiences. He chose these topics, he said, because it was evident from the notes of John Paul I, who had devoted three addresses to the theological virtues, that he intended to speak next on the cardinal virtues. All four talks, reprinted from "The Pope Speaks" (Vol.24 No.1, 1979) will be presented in Living City; the first two talks appear below.



PRUDENCE

(To the Audience of Oct. 25,1978)

When Pope John Paul I spoke to those present at the general audience Wednesday, September 27, no one could have imagined that it was for the last time. His death after 33 days of pontificate, surprised the entire world and filled it with deep sorrow. The man who stirred such great joy in the Church and inspired such hope in the hearts of mankind brought his mission to completion in so short a time! In his death the often repeated words of the Gospel were proved true: "You must be prepared in the same way. The Son of Man is coming at the time you least expect."[1]

John Paul I was always watchful; the Lord's call did not catch him by surprise. He responded to it with the same apprehensive joy with which he had accepted his election to the throne of St. Peter August 26.

Today John Paul II presents himself to you for the first time. Now, four weeks after that general audience, he wishes to greet you and talk with you. He wishes to take up the themes set by John Paul I. Let us recall that he spoke of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. He had ended with the subject of love. His final teaching was that love is the greatest of the virtues here on earth, as St. Paul likewise teaches.[2] Love crosses the threshold of life and death for when the time of faith and hope has come to an end, love continues. John Paul I has now finished the period of faith, of hope and of the love that found such magnificent expression here on earth and will reveal its full splendor only in eternity.

Today we shall be speaking of another virtue, for I have learned from the deceased pontiff's notes that he intended to discuss not only the three theological virtues but the four so called "cardinal" virtues as well. His intention was to speak of all of the "seven lamps" of the Christian life, to use Pope John XXIII's name for them.

Prudence according to natural ethics

Today, then, I want to continue with the plan of the departed pope and to speak briefly of the virtue of prudence. Not a few of the ancients had already spoken of this virtue. For this we owe them profound thanks and gratitude. At a certain level they taught us that the value of a human being is to be measured by the yardstick of the moral good he has done in his lifetime.

This means that priority belongs to the virtue of prudence. The prudent man who strives for all that is truly good is endeavoring to measure everything, every situation and all he does, by the yardstick of moral goodness. The prudent man, therefore, is not, as people often think, a man who knows how to make his way in life and take the greatest advantage of it; he is, rather, the one who knows how to form his entire life according to the dictates of right conscience and the requirements of true morality.

Key to life

Prudence is, thus, the key to the accomplishment of the basic task each of us has received from God. This task is the perfecting of man himself. God has given each of us our human nature. We must carry out the task according to a consistent plan of action.

But the Christian has the right and duty to look at the virtue of prudence in another perspective as well. Prudence is, as it were, the image and likeness of God's providence as seen in terms of the concrete individual person. The reason for this is that, as we know from the Book of Genesis, man has been created in the image and likeness of God. And God is carrying out a plan in the history of the created world and especially in the history of mankind.

The goal of this plan, as St. Thomas teaches, is the ultimate good of the universe. As carried

1) Mt 24, 44. 2) See 1 Cor 13,13

out in the history of mankind, this plan becomes simply the plan of salvation, a plan that embraces all of us.

In the execution of this plan Jesus Christ is at the center, for he expresses God's eternal love and fatherly concern for the salvation of man. The carrying out of the plan is, at the same time, the full expression of divine providence.

A reflection of providence

Now, man, who is God's image, should also, in a sense, be providence, as St. Thomas once again teaches us. But he is to be it in regard to, and within the framework of, his own life. He can thus take part in the great journey of all creation toward the goal which is the good of the created order. To put the matter once again in the language of faith: man is to participate in the divine plan of salvation. He is to journey toward salvation and help others likewise reach their salvation. By helping others he saves himself.

I ask all who are listening to me to reflect on their own lives in this light. Am I prudent? Do I live a consistent and responsible life? Does the plan I am carrying out serve the true good? Does it help to the salvation which Christ and the Church want for us?

If there are students or sons or daughters listening to me today, let them reflect in this light on their school tasks, their interests, their pastimes,the kind of friends, male and female, that they have.

If fathers or mothers of families are listening to me, let them think for a moment of their duties as spouses and parents.

If a minister of state or politician is listening to me, let him review the list of his duties and responsibilities. Does he seek the true good of society, of the nation, of mankind? Or only particular and partial interests?

If a journalist or commentator or anyone else who influences public opinion is listening to me, let him reflect on the value and purpose of this influence.

And for myself, the pope, who is speaking to you: What must I do to act prudently? I am thinking just now of the letters which Albino Luciani, then patriarch of Venice, wrote to St. Bernard. In his reply to Cardinal Luciani, the abbot of Clairvaux, a doctor of the Church, reminds him emphatically that a person who governs must be "prudent."

What, then, must the new pope do in order to act prudently? Certainly he has a good deal of work to do in this area. He must always be learning and must always be meditating on the problems of government. But what can he do more than that? He should pray and strive to have the gift of the Holy Spirit that is known as the gift of counsel.

Let all who want the new pope to be a prudent pastor of the Church pray that he be given this gift of counsel. Let them also ask this same gift for themselves through the intercession of the Mother of Good Counsel for it is desirable that all human beings behave prudently, as well as that those in power act with true prudence. This, in order that, with prudence, and strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and, in particular, by the gift of counsel, the Church may take an effective part in the great journey toward the good that is the goal of all human beings and may show to all the path of eternal salvation.

JUSTICE

(To the Audience of Nov. 8, 1978)

Dear brothers and sisters: In these first audiences, at which I have the happiness of meeting with you who come here from Rome, from Italy and from so many other countries, it is my wish, as I said October 25, to go on developing the themes chosen by my predecessor, John Paul I. He intended to speak not only of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love, but also of of the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. He looked upon all of these virtues as seven lamps for the Christian life.

God has now called him into eternity, and he had time to speak only of the three principal virtues; faith, hope, and love, which illuminate the whole of Christian life. His unworthy successor, in meeting with you to reflect on the cardinal virtues in the spirit of his lamented predecessor, wishes, as it were, to light the other lamps near his tomb.

Today my subject is justice. It is, perhaps, a good thing that this should be the theme of the first instruction for the month of November for, as a matter of fact, we are urged during this month to turn our gaze to the life of the individual and the life of mankind as a whole and to see these in the perspective of ultimate justice.

We are all aware, in one or other way, that, given the transitoriness of this world it is not possible to attain to justice in its fullness during the present life. The words we hear so often, "there is no justice in this world," may, indeed, be the expression of a facile oversimplification. Yet, they also express a profound truth.

In a sense, justice is beyond the reach of man. It cannot be made fully real within the dimensions of his human life nor is it possible to establish fully just relationships among individuals, groups, societies and segments of society, nations and so on.

Every human being lives and dies with a feeling that his thirst for justice cannot be slaked because the world is not in a position to satisfy completely a being who is created in the image of God — to satisfy him either in the depths of his person or in the various aspects of his human life.

In consequence, this hunger for justice causes man to open himself to God who "is the very essence of justice." Jesus gave clear and concise expression to this point when He said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blest are they who hunger and thirst for justice; they shall have their fill."[3]

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3) Mt 5, 6.

Let us keep in mind the meaning that the Gospel thus gives to justice and, at the same time, let us consider justice as a basic dimension of human life on this earth: the life of the individual, of society, of the human race. This is the ethical dimension of life.

Justice is a basic principle for the existence and coexistence of individuals as it is of human communities, societies, peoples. Justice also is a principle of existence for the Church, for the various social structures, especially those of the state and for international organizations.

On this broad and diversified terrain the individual and mankind are constantly in quest of justice. The search is an ongoing one and of supreme importance.

According to its various relationships and aspects justice has, over the centuries, acquired more specific and limited definitions. As a result we have the concepts of commutative, distributive, legal and social justice. All this labor of definition is testimony to the fundamental importance of justice for moral order in social and international relations among men. It can be said that the very meaning of man's life on earth is bound up with justice.

To define correctly "what is due" to each from all and to all from each, and "what is due" (debitum) to man from his fellow man in variously organized relationships — to define it, yes, but above all, to put it into practice — is extremely important for it is by justice that man lives and it is, thanks to justice, that his life has a meaning.

Man and systems

Consequently, throughout the centuries of man's life on earth, there has been a constant effort and a constant struggle to introduce a just order into the whole of human life and its various aspects. We should be respectful of the many and varied programs, sometimes reformative in character, which various trends and systems produce.

At the same time, we should be aware that the primary concern here must not be systems but justice and man. Man cannot be for the sake of the system. The system must be for the sake of man.

Therefore, we must defend ourselves against the rigidification of systems. I am thinking of social, economic, political and cultural systems, which must all be sensitive to man and his integral good and be able to reform themselves and their own structures in accordance with a fully authentic vision of what man requires. It is from this point of view that we must evaluate the great effort being made in our time to define and support "the rights of man" in the life of contemporary mankind, peoples and states.

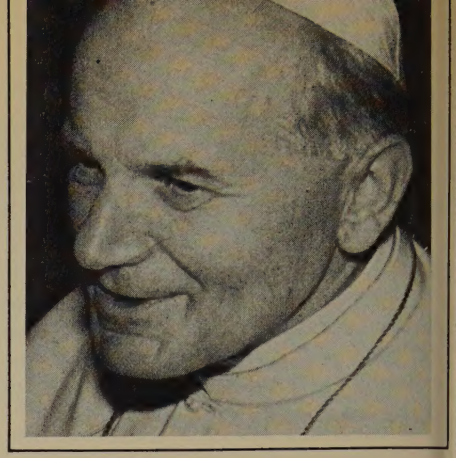
The Church in this century has been, and continues to be engaged in, a continuous dialogue on the broad front of the contemporary world, as is evidenced by numerous papal encyclicals and the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The present pope will certainly be obliged to return again and again to these topics. In today's short explanation he must restrict himself to simply pointing out how vast and diversified the terrain is.

Justice takes many forms

It is necessary, then, that there be a framework of justice within which to live our lives. It is even more necessary that each of us be himself just and act justly in relation to those near and at a distance, to the community, to the society of which he is a member and in relation to God as well.

Justice has many objects and takes many forms. There is even a form of justice that is concerned with what man "owes" to God. This in itself is a vast theme and of primordial importance. I shall not develop it now but I cannot refrain from at least mentioning it.

Meanwhile, let us dwell for a moment on justice at the human level. Christ has left us the commandment of love for our neighbor. This commandment includes all that has to do with justice.



There can be no love without justice.

Love is, indeed, "superior" to justice. At the same time love proves itself in the form of justice. Even a father and mother, in loving their child, must also be just to it. If justice is weakened, love itself is jeopardized.

To be just means to give each person what is due to him or her. "What is due" includes temporal goods of a material kind. The best example here may be the wages owed for work or the so-called right to the fruits of one's own labor or one's own land.

In addition to these material goods, a person also has the right to the good name, respect, esteem and reputation he or she has earned. The more we know a person, the more his or her personal character, intelligence and heart are revealed to us. The more, too, we become aware — and we ought to become aware — of the criterion by which to "measure the person" and of what it means to be "just" to that person.

There is need, then, of constantly deepening our understanding of justice. This knowledge is not of a theoretical kind. Justice is a virtue, a capacity of the human spirit, the human will and the human heart as well. We must also pray to be just and to know how to be just.

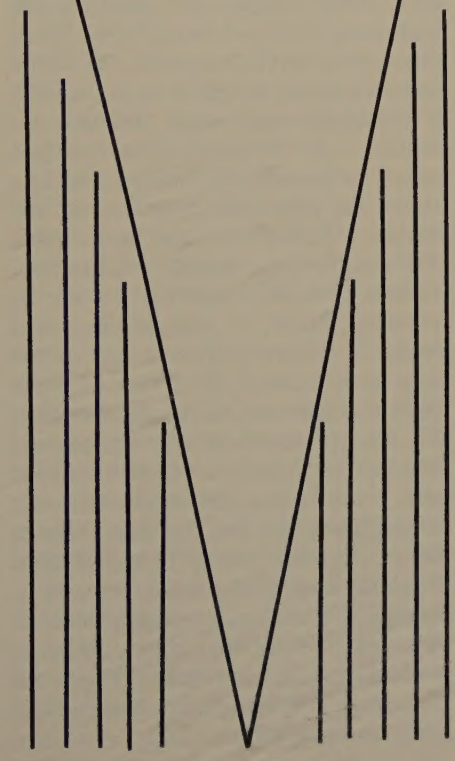
We cannot deny the Lord's words: "The measure with which you measure will be used to measure you."[4]

A just man is a man of "just measure." May we all be that! May we all strive constantly to become that! To all, my blessing. ●

4) Mt 7,2.

When the roots need to go down deeper

by Juan de Yzaguirre Lopez



I am the fourth child among five boys and two girls in my family and my name is Juan. We are from Barcelona, the city of my father. He is a very enterprising person; he started from nothing and and now he is the director of a bank. From my childhood I can remember that we were a very warm and close family. I was particularly close to the brother who is one and a half years older than I. We worked together, and were in the same class at school. We did everything together.

I remember that since I was a young adolescent I always wanted to be the best at whatever I did. I went to a large high school of 2,700 students. Every month there was an evaluation of all the students in the school. I worked very hard to reach the top and finally I made it. I remember the day they told me, "You have to realize that higher than this it's impossible to go." I felt that the top was nothing. All that effort was for nothing. Instead of feeling fulfilled I felt that I had distanced myself from everyone else, because between me and the others there had developed a relationship based on competition. So that experience of being the top student turned out to be a negative experience for me in a certain sense.

I also liked sports very much; I was part of the national championship volleyball team. So I was successful in sports too. It required a tremendous effort and discipline, but then when we won the championship, I thought, "So what?" There was no real change in my life, just on the outside, like changing a tie, but inside me everything was the same.

But a turning point in my life came one day when my brother and I were discussing our plans for the future. He told me, "Well Juan, I'm planning to go to Africa." I thought he was joking, "Why are you going there?" He replied, "Well, here at home we have everything. I want to go and help the lepers." He felt God was asking him to give his life for all those people. That was a shock for me and I thought to myself, "He's wasting his life; there's no success or recognition in that." But I didn't say anything, I respected his decision. By the end of the conversation, however, I had a very strange feeling. A story came to mind that I had heard at Sunday Mass with my family. Jesus was with Martha and Mary, and Martha was doing many things. She was very busy trying to please Jesus, and then she was so tired. she complained that her sister wasn't helping her. And Jesus replied, "Only one thing is necessary, and Mary has chosen the better part." Since I had always wanted to excel, to be the best, this answer of Jesus left a big question mark in my mind, and when my brother told me he was going to Africa I had an intuition that my brother was choosing the better part.

That was the beginning of a big crisis in my life, because my brother was faithful to his word and one day he left home. He went to Belgium for training, but for some health reason, in the end he wasn't able to go to Africa. In the meantime, however, more than to fight leprosy, he felt that God was asking him to give his life to him in the priesthood, as a missionary. And that's what he did. I was sixteen years old when my brother first told me his plan. He left home, and I felt alone, with this big question mark inside me, "What is the 'better part' in life, the most important thing to do?"

I started to join different groups that did things for other people. This brought about a big change in my life because up to the time that my brother left the only important person in my life had been me. I was in Madrid now and notwithstanding all my activities I began to lose hope that I would ever find anything that would fulfill my life.

Finally it was time for me to choose a career, a field of study. I thought perhaps psychology could give me some answers, some reasons for our behavior, so I enrolled at the university. I became very critical, very skeptical about everything. By now I knew that being a successful student, or being successful at sports, was not an answer in itself. And on the other hand I

wasn't looking for anymore group experiences, because I had enough of those. I think that without realizing it, I was looking for God, because I had a feeling that it was God who had fascinated my brother and changed his life.

During my first year at the university a friend of mine there told me, "There is a person from France, a doctor, who is going to speak about a new movement." My first reaction was, "Thank you very much, but I have no time." He continued, "I have heard that this is something very new in Spain, and I think you should know about it, because it is going to become important here." I went to that conference and the speaker had a horrible accent. Actually, it wasn't an accent; he just didn't speak Spanish very well. Only with difficulty was I able to understand what he was saying. I thought, "Look at this guy, he's got a lot of courage to give a talk with this accent." But more than that I was impressed by what he was saying. I felt as if I was listening to someone who didn't speak empty words. Then he started saying something that kept my attention for the rest of the talk, "There were a group of young people who were looking for something to fulfill their lives, but the war seemed to destroy all their ideals. They realized that everything passes away, and that the only ideal worth living for is God." When he said that, it was as if he had put my deepest feelings into words. I really didn't have an ideal to live for, nothing was really motivating me. I had an intuition that this was what my brother had found. This man concluded saying that those people had made a choice of God, because they wanted to respond to God's love for them with their love, and that choice was expressed by their love for one another.

I went to him at the end and asked, "Do you really believe what you just said?" He had the wisdom to answer me, "What you really want to know is if you believe what I said. Why don't you try it, try to live what you understood today. And then tell me if it is true or not." I liked the challenge. I

MY MENTALITY WAS CHANGING, MY WAY OF LOVING WAS CHANGING, EVERYTHING WAS CHANGING.

asked him, "What should I do as the first thing?" He told me very simply, "Whatever you do to the least of your brothers, remember you do it to Jesus. And then tell me what happens." It sounded so simple.

So I went home and I tried to remember "Whatever you do to the least, you do to Jesus." At home I had my room, my things, and I usually did things my way. I never asked anybody's opinion. Returning home that day though, I stopped in the kitchen where my mother was preparing lunch for us as she did every day, and asked her how she was. It embarrassed me to ask, "Can I do anything for you?". She answered, "Well, if you want to scramble some eggs, it'll help me get lunch ready." So I did it. Then I set the table.

Everyone could tell when my father was arriving home from work because of the noise his keys made, but I had never paid much attention. I would say, "Hello," and keep right on reading or watching TV, or whatever. That day I thought to myself, "If Jesus were arriving at my house, would I continue with my things, or would I go to greet him?" I felt very awkward but I went to the door to welcome him home. My father looked at me and said, "What do you need?" Usually I talked to him to ask for the car or money. Now, I just smiled and said, "I was wondering how your day was today." I'm sure my father was also embarrassed, because he wasn't used to my questions. My father likes to change his shoes and sit in a special chair with the newspaper. So, for the first time in life, I prepared everything for him, Puzzled by it all he asked me, "I'm honestly wondering what you really want." "I just thought you must be tired," I answered. Then we finished eating, and I helped to clean up the table.

My sisters always cleaned and put things in order, so I would just leave things around out of place, thinking they would pick up after me. But those words of Jesus that I was trying to live included also my sisters. At first they started teasing me, "Juan must be in love." Then they started to do what I was afraid they would do. "Let Juan do that, he likes to do those things. He likes to clean the table." And I felt like someone who was being taken advantage of. So I stopped and said, "It doesn't work. That's not what that man was talking about the other day." So I called him, "Listen, I'm sorry, but what you said doesn't work, because everybody is taking advantage of me at my house now." He said that probably I had not acted always out of love for Jesus, and secondly, that to be able to continue loving for Jesus it helps to keep in contact with others who are trying to live in the same way. "Then you aren't alone and you have the strength that comes from being united," he concluded. So I went to visit my friend to find out more. That was the first time I went to a Focolare Center. I was struck by the relationship among the people living there. I told them of my failures, my disappointments, everything. They talked about living each present moment for Jesus, without worrying about the past or the future. I understood it was something to be lived not only at home but at the university, and everywhere. There had been another friend of mine at that first meeting and I asked him if he wanted to try to live this way too. So we decided to try to love the way Jesus says, ready to give our lives for one another.

Well, that too, was very embarrassing for me, because I had never wanted to give my life for anybody. I lived my life in order to pursue my own interests, to fulfill myself. But this new way of life was bringing about a big change in me. I began to see that my life was being fulfilled in the measure that I loved.

So I started with this friend. We had known each other since high school. I knew his defects and he knew mine. But in the Focolare they had told us to look at each other each day as if we were meeting for the first time. And so we knew that if we believed in the presence of Jesus in everyone, things would work out.

With our friends we often talked about Jesus' prayer for unity. The only way to achieve it was to allow Jesus himself to do it, because he alone is capable of bringing about real unity. The way to allow Jesus to do this was to keep him in our midst through our constant mutual charity.[1]

Meanwhile our life was changing. We wanted to seek out the "least ones" and love them in a special way. My friend and I said, "Let's see who is alone or left out in our class." There was a fellow that everybody made fun of, myself included. Now I couldn't make fun of him anymore. Not only that, I had to love him. So we thought that we could help him with his school work. He was glad for the help and so my friend or I always spent some time with him after school. He soon wanted to know why we were helping him. I was reluctant to talk because I didn't really want him to know the main reason. I thought "if this fellow wants to join us, we're doomed, because we won't go anywhere with people like him." That was my mentality still, but my friends told me, "You should tell him the truth if he asks." So I went back and told this student, "Well, trying to live the Gospel has made me change, and one of the things we want to do is see if we can be helpful to anyone, including you." He was so impressed that he said, "I'd like to do that, too." I almost fainted.

I wrote to my friends in the Focolare, and told them, "Listen, things are going badly here. People who shouldn't be interested, are interested, and those who should be interested, aren't." My friends replied, "Follow Jesus and his inspiration and not what you are thinking with your human way of seeing things." Well after this

Juan de Yzaguirre Lopez, first to the left.

fellow joined us, others in the class saw that not only did we stop fighting but that we were able to love one another. It was such a strong example for everybody to see that within two months we had become a group of fourteen students.

That was a big lesson for me. I realized that this unity that was being built was going beyond our most intelligent predictions, and that the love of Jesus for each person is personal and mysterious to our eyes. Also, we were learning to trust in the Gospel.

Then we said, "What we're doing is fine in our classroom, but what about our neighborhood?" There were many people who were sick or with problems. So we went to a big orphanage in our free time. We asked a staff member if there were children who had nobody to visit them. We were told that there were three brothers, one of whom was paralyzed from polio, who seldom had visitors. We started playing and making friends with them. Once I went there on a Sunday afternoon, and when I entered the room I realized that another person entered with me. It was visiting time, and all the children were waiting. The two brothers came running and hugged me, because we had become very good friends. We were laughing and enjoying ourselves when after two or three minutes that person who was also in the room asked, "Excuse me, may I say hello to my children?" I was stunned as I realized that he was their father. Their relationship was cold; the children hardly looked at him. I asked the father if I could stay with them a while longer and he said yes. He told me that he had serious problems with his wife, that she had threatened to kill him if she saw him again. He was a very heavy drinker - he continued- and had been unable to support his family. From then on we became friends.

During that period we were preparing to have a Gen Congress. For the first time in my life I was working. Before I had always asked my father for money but now I felt that I should support myself. The only job I found was picking fruit from trees, a very, very tiring job. I worked for three months during the summer, from sunrise to sunset.

One Sunday the father of the three boys said, "You know, I'm concerned about the youngest child who is always in bed. I would like to buy a wheelchair for him, but I don't have the money. It's sad that he can never come with us when we go out." Immediately I thought of the money I had been saving in order to go to the Gen Congress in Italy and I asked him how much money he thought a wheelchair would cost. He quoted the exact amount that I had saved. I talked to the other Gen and asked what they thought. In the Gospel it is written, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." So I said, "Well, in the present moment I have this money, and there is this need. I think I have to trust in the providence of God." And everybody agreed with that.

(continued on page 28)

1) see Mt 18,20.

WORD OF LIFE

"In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven." (Mt 5,16)

If you are a believer you have a task to fulfill in relationship to others, toward those who do not know God.

Christians, in fact, cannot shun the world, hide from it, or regard religion as a private matter. Rather Christians must live in the world because of a responsibility, a mission before all people: that of being the light that shines.

You, too, are given this task, and if you do not fulfill it, you will be like salt that has lost its flavor or light that has gone out in the darkness, no longer useful.

"In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:16).

This light is made visible through "good works." It shines through the good works of Christians.

You may say: "But not only Christians do good works. There are others who work toward progress,who promote social justice..."

You are right. But while Christians also do and must do these things, their specific task is not this alone. Christians must do good works with a new spirit, that spirit by which it is no longer they who live, but Christ who live in them.

St. Matthew does not, in fact, refer only to isolated works of charity (such as visiting prisoners, clothing the naked, or any of the other works of mercy dictated by the needs of today) but to the Christians' complete adherence to the will of God in such a way that his whole life becomes a "good work."

If Christians act this way, then the praise for what they do will not be addressed to their persons but to Christ in them. Thus, through them, God will be present in the world. This, then, is the task of Christians: to let the light that is in them shine through, and to be the "sign" of this presence of God among his people.

"In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven."

If this is the characteristic of one believer's good works, then the Christian community in the midst of the world must also have the same specific function: to reveal by its life, the presence of God that manifests itself wherever two or more are united in his name, and whose presence has been promised to his Church until the very end of time.

The early Church gave great importance to these words of Jesus. Especially in difficult times when Christians were subjected to slander, they were urged to refrain from violence. Their behavior was to be the best refutation of the lies spoken against them.

In St. Paul's second letter to Titus we read: "Urge the young men to be self-controlled. You yourself, in all things, must be an example in good works. Be sincere and serious in your teaching. Use sound words that cannot be criticized, so that your enemies may be put to shame by not having anything bad to say about us" (Titus 2, 6-8).

"In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven."

Also today, the light which leads people to God is the Christian life lived well.

I'll tell you a story.

Antoinette was an Italian girl who, because of her work, moved to Grenoble, France. She had a job in an office where many of the other employees didn't take their work very seriously. Being a Christain she therefore tried to treat each person as she would Jesus. She helped everybody and was always calm and smiling. Often someone would get angry and shout at her, or make fun of her attitude, saying, "Since you like to work so much, you can do my typing too."

Antoinette would remain silent and do the work. She knew that they weren't really mean at heart, that they probably had their troubles.

One day the office manager came to talk to her while the others were away. "Now you must tell me how you manage never to lose your patience and to smile all the time." She answered, a little embarrassed, "Well, I just try to keep calm, and to look for the positive side to everything."

The manager banged his fist on the desk saying, "No, God must have something to do with it, I'm sure! Otherwise it would be impossible. And to think that I didn't believe in God!"

A few days later Antoinette was called to the manager's office. He told her he wanted to transfer her to another department, so that she could "transform" it in the same way that she had transformed her present office.

"In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven."

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

Each month a "Word of Life" appears in Living City or in its Supplement. The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Word of Life.

I DIDN'T NEED A REASON

Thursday evening we had some guests in our home and they ended up staying fairly late and so, to keep them company, I also stayed up late and I was happy to do it. The next day I knew that I wouldn't have to go to school, and so I told myself, "Well, Friday morning I can sleep all I want." As it turned out though, we were having a party on Saturday night, for about thirty people, and my mother had a lot of shopping to do. So, early in the morning she woke me up and asked me, "Would you mind taking me shopping?" Right then I couldn't believe it! However, the word of life for April was, "He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (Jn 13, 1). I thought, "If I want to love her to the end, I have to start to love her in the first place." So I said, "Okay, I'll get up and get ready and then we can go."

Whenever we go shopping my mother usually takes what seems like years. Sometimes I get upset at that, but I realized that it's another way to love her. I knew that since we were having thirty people, it would be another long wait in the car so I prepared myself and brought along some of my homework. As it turned out, she stayed in the store for four hours. It was a beautiful sunny day, so I just rolled down the windows and did my homework. I thought, "I'll just love to the end even if my mom comes back tomorrow. I have to just keep loving." When she came out of the store I think that she expected me to complain as I had done in the past. She noticed that this time I didn't, and she just stood there looking at me, trying to give me a reason for being late. But I didn't want a reason. I was happy because I had succeeded in loving her "to the end."

N. C.

RELIEVED AND FREE

A few days ago, our five-month old son woke at 2:30 a.m. for his usual feeding. My husband, who had gotten up for something just minutes before, heard the baby first and wanting to help, changed his diaper and played with him until I came. Angry, frustrated feelings were building up inside of me because now the baby was really awake, ready for more play, and the feeding would not, as it usually does, put him to sleep. In fact, it seemed that he would be awake for at least another hour, and I would have to be up during that time also then, with him.

I remembered the word of life for the month: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me," and knew that this was an opportunity to live it. The choice was so clear: to live the word or not, to love my cross in this difficulty, or to remain angry. I chose to live the word, and felt so relieved and free! And the peace and joy that followed was the hundredfold. But I felt that God gave even more, for my husband insisted that I go to sleep while he stay with the baby. I agreed but told him to call me after a half hour so that we could "take shifts" and share the difficulty. We were both happy to be helping each other, working together. However, my shift never came, for the baby fell asleep within the first half hour!

L. C.

FROM A TASK TO A GAME

One day our little boy was really being very cranky. My wife and I had asked him to pick up the toys in his room because he had blocks all over and it was almost time to go to bed. He started to whine and cry and just refused to do it. I tried to talk nicely to him but that didn't work. I couldn't think of anything else to do and I was frustrated. I thought of the word of life, especially where it says, ". . . for cut off from me you can do nothing." I realized that that was what was happening. I was not remaining in Him and was trying to do it on my own.

After I thought about this, the idea came to mind that my son liked to play games. I then changed the job of picking up things in his room from a task to a game. Well, he responded immediately and in no time the room was clean.

R. S.

SAVE YOUR RICHES . . .

One day I was visiting a neighbor who had just had a new baby. During our conversation she mentioned that she didn't have a carriage and the weather was so nice that she longed to take the baby out. At home I knew that I had a lovely coach carriage. I really liked this carriage. I said, "Listen, my carriage is in the garage, and I probably won't use it much because my daughter is already seven months old. So you can borrow it *when I don't need it . . .*"

When I got home, the word of life that I had been trying to live, "Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor. Provide for yourselves purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get to them, no moth can destroy them" (Luke 12:33), began to haunt me. I walked into the garage and took out the carriage and went back to my neighbor and said, "Here, take my carriage; you'll really be able to use it." Then I felt at peace inside.

Several days later she told me that someone had remarked that it was such a beautiful carriage. My neighbor had said that it wasn't hers, that it belonged to me. I told her, "No, now it's yours." She looked at me with such a happy face.

S. M.

MY GIFT

I went to a meeting for adults at which many of the adults were in need of an opportunity to talk about personal problems. A young woman came into the room with a seven year old boy whom she intended to keep with her. I thought that his presence might be a deterrant to openness for some of the adults present; I also saw that his mother probably needed to be there. I offered to care for the child in another room for her. The child was very friendly and easy to be with, but after about ten minutes, thoughts of why I should have to spend an hour and a half with a child I didn't even know — whom I judged should be home and in bed, began to creep into my mind. The word of life for the month was " . . . put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received" (1 Peter 4, 10), and it came to me that I had a perfect opportunity to share my gift being comfortable with children and making them feel good about themselves. I entered totally into games and conversation with this child, and the time just flew by. At the end of the meeting, I was filled with peace and a special joy.

D. C.

WHAT WOULD REMAIN FOREVER

I've been working on a thesis. It's a very demanding task and some days it can be very frustrating. Several months ago, the word of life was "I am the vine, you are the branches; whoever remains in me with me in him bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing" (John 15, 5). So I told myself that everything I would do, whether it was research, or to talk to a professor or student, I wanted to do it for Jesus.

I had come up with a very good idea for one part of the thesis. I researched it, and worked on it at length, and was really quite proud of myself. Then I discovered an article which someone else had written. This person had done exactly the same thing I had done, with the same ideas that I had had, only he had done it much better. This meant that I would have to throw out all the work of the past three or four weeks. It was a suffering for me because all my energy had been spent working on this segment. It was then I realized that what would remain forever was the love I had put into it trying to live the word of life.

R. F.

QUITE AN IMPROVEMENT

"So always treat others as you would like them to treat you" was the word of life when I first had a rather off-beat teenager in not one but two of my classes. He demanded a certain amount of attention and did not exactly arouse any sentiment of love on my part. As I was wondering how to handle him, I reflected upon the fact that I should treat him as I would like to be treated and that I should look at him through the eyes of love.

I decided to treat him with respect and reach out to him. We established a unique rapport with each other and he worked very hard. I found him to be warm and sensitive. He performed well academically and produced a beautiful computer art project for me.

Later, at an open house, I met the boy's father. He thanked me for the interest I had shown in his son and informed me that I had been instrumental in preventing his son from being a drop-out. The boy is now about to graduate from high school and I was only too happy to give him a letter of recommendation for a scholarship. I had truly received my hundredfold!

A. D.

BETTER THAN A TV SHOW

My brother and I both work at a nursing home and we get off at 8:00 p.m. One night during Lent, we planned to hurry home so we could watch *Jesus of Nazareth* on television. It started at 8:00 so we decided that if we hurried home, we would only miss about ten minutes. Right before we were ready to leave, we learned that a woman, who gets off at the same time we do, did not have a ride home. At first, we hesitated to offer her a ride but then we remembered the word of life: "He had loved his own in this world and would show his love for them to the end." We remembered that we also had to love this woman to the end, so we immediately offered her a ride. She is the cook

and on this particular evening was very much behind, so at 8:00 she still had to clean all the pots and pans. Remembering the Word of Life, my brother and I went and helped her finish cleaning.

When we left work, it was about 8:30. Then, when we reached her house, the lady remembered that she had forgotten to turn off the oven at the nursing home. She asked if we could take her back so she could turn it off. Remembering the word of life, we said: "Of course." When we got back to the nursing home, the front door was locked. My brother went to a back window to get the nurse to come open it. This took a long time so when we took the lady home for the second time, it was 9:30. On the way to our house, we were so happy. We realized that we had missed *Jesus of Nazareth* on television but had found Jesus in the lady at work.

P. M.

A CONSOLATION IN FAILURE

This word of life, "He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (John 13,1), was the source of many small experiences during the month. It's one of those texts that can seem a bit forbidding since loving to the end is the last thing my "old man"[1] wants to do but in reality it was rich in consolation.

Right at the beginning of the month I completely blew it with this word of life. A writer who calls every so often phoned me at the office. This person was very upset about the fact that someone else was doing a TV program on a subject she was researching for a freelance magazine article. She thought that she would lose the money she hoped to make from her article, because of the program, and she seemed to be somehow blaming me, although I had nothing to do with it, didn't know anything about the program or the article, and knew no one involved. As far as I could see, the program and her article were completely different in approach, and might even be complementary. I tried to explain this, but she cut me off. "Yes," she said, "but you people seem to think I can live on air!"

It has nothing to do with *me!* I protested . . . and instantly, she slammed down the receiver, saying, "Thanks a lot!"

In that moment I realized that I had failed to love to the end. I had, at the crucial moment, only thought of myself and tried both to defend myself and separate myself from her: "It has nothing to do with me!" It was a good lesson right at the start of the month but I knew I could start again.

As the month passed, in fact, there were many opportunities to put this word of life into practice. I would think of it in the morning, and often forget about it for hours. But at certain moments it came back to my mind.

For instance, one day I was tired and the day was almost over. I had just enough time to do a task that I never enjoyed, but which had to be done. I sat at my typewriter and started, but I soon came to some small difficulty. I thought, "Why not leave it until the morning?" But I remembered the word of life and kept on going, loving to the end by finishing the job, because I knew it was the will of God for me to finish.

One evening I was looking after the children. I was tired and a bit irritable. My three year old son was being difficult and I was sharp with him. His pride was hurt and he refused to come into the bedroom for prayers. He lay on the floor at the end of the hall, crying with anger. I was tempted to just go ahead with prayers, but I remembered the word of life and knew I had to love him to the end. That meant not giving in to his bad behavior; but it also meant showing him that I loved him, that I didn't want to exclude him, and that I was sorry for hurting his feelings. So I went and sat down on the floor with him. "Pat," I said, "you don't have to come in for prayers with me and Rosemary, but we really want you to." Then I went and began prayers, and within a minute or so he followed and sat on my lap.

This word of life was a great consolation in failure, because I understood that loving to the end meant just that — starting to love again after a failure. When I fail, (lose patience with the children, say something uncharitable, whatever . . .) the temptation is to get discouraged and kind of wallow in failure for a while. But that word of life meant getting up immediately, putting the past behind, and doing whatever was necessary to love again.

It also helped a lot first thing in the morning on days that I knew would be heavy or perhaps full of suffering. My inclination on such days, or at the beginning of a demanding week, is just to lie in bed for a while, delaying the day. But not only did the word of life mean that I had to get up and start the day with some act of love; it also simplified everything. Because I knew that all I had to do to love to the end was to do whatever God asked me to do at that moment, as well as I could. Worrying about the difficult meeting, or the deadlines, or the anxieties, of the business day ahead only interfered with my real purpose — loving to the end right now. Not only did this way of living the word of life bring peace, whenever I managed to do it; but the things I was inclined to dread in the day always turned out to be completely different from what I would have imagined.

J. B.

1) See Col 3, 9-10

WORD OF LIFE FOR SEPTEMBER

"Remember this!
If you have faith as big
as a mustard seed,
you can say to this hill,
'Go from here to there!'
and it will go.
You could do anything!"

(Mt 17,20)

by Igino Giordani

The First Social Encyclical

The first social encyclical was written by Peter the Apostle. His manner with Jesus had a down-to-earth quality of heroism. It was characterized by unexpected outbursts of enthusiasm often interspersed with just as sudden let-downs which were, however, swift in passing.

He was a fisherman who had left behind his nets and his boat, his family and country, in order to devote himself to an adventure which was destined to end up on the cross: an upright one for Christ, and an upside-down one for Peter.

He approached the Master with the bold gestures typical of the fearless common man that he was — a person easily carried away by his feelings. Once while sitting in his boat, Peter spotted Jesus on the shore. He didn't waste any time rowing, but jumped right into the water and swam ashore fully clothed. And at the Last Supper, when Jesus was preparing to wash the feet of the apostles, Peter protested, thinking that the Master was degrading himself: "You shall never wash my feet!" Peter said. But Jesus responded: "If I do not wash you, you will have no share in my heritage." At this, Peter, impetuously went to the other extreme, "Lord," he said to Jesus, "then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."

On another occasion, when Peter had been fishing all night with no success and Jesus told him to try again, he replied: "Master, we have been hard at it all night and have caught nothing; but if you say so, I will lower the nets." Upon seeing that the nets were then filled with fish, Peter fell to his knees. He expressed his admiration for what Jesus had done with these words: "Leave me, Lord. I am a sinful man."

When Peter witnessed the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, he made the outlandish proposal to stay up there, at the height of contemplation, and build three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But, as the evangelist notes, Peter "did not really know what he was saying."

This is Peter: a man who considered himself to be nothing in front of Jesus. In him, faithfulness and dedication, service and admiration, were coupled with a natural generosity. And all these qualities were heightened by his faith which was at times as dazzling as lightning, and at others as elusive as fleeting shadows.

Jesus liked this. Beneath Peter's impulsive nature he spotted a staunch heart, so much so that he renamed him Cephas, which means Rock; and he often reprimanded Peter, in order to purify him.

Christ had come into the world to bring love — the principle of life — and Peter was hungry for that life. Since Christian love is the light of God — God who is love — it led Peter, an uneducated fisherman, to be the first to discover the divinity of the Master. On the plane of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked the apostles this difficult and crucial question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

Some regarded him as a prophet come back to life. Some thought he was John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah . . .

"And you," he said to them, "Who do you say that I am?"

Peter spoke up for all of them: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." In other words: "You are the Messiah we have been waiting for, you are God."

This was quite a revelation! Only love could have led Peter to identify Love Incarnate, and Christ, pleased with Peter's reply, conferred upon him the leadership of the Christian world.

If we look upon Christ's choice from a human point of view it could amaze us to no end. For Peter, notwithstanding his generosity, was often plagued by uncertainty. (He lacked faith while walking on the water with the Master, and then denied Christ before the servants.) Furthermore, he had a wife and children and was, therefore, bound by his concern for people and for the things of this world.

Yet it was precisely because of his humanity — which, notwithstanding its weaknesses, was yearning for the divine — that Peter was chosen.

Through Peter who was so closely bound to the common man, Christ, the God-Man, continued to live on in the masses, the masses of laborers, of everyday people, of families burdened by the need for food and shelter, the masses of people victimized by the wiles of nature and by human arrogance.

Jesus knew that in this worker, so familiar with labor and with familial tribulations, he had found a worthy interpreter of his redemptive mission, and a responsible head of the new order. Peter was a father who would not shrink from the task of building the community.

By choosing Peter, a common man, Jesus brought the lowly into the limelight; at a time when work was belittled, he elevated a laborer to a position of leadership.

Peter fulfilled Mary's Magnificat and the revolution of Jesus: " . . . the last shall come first."

Now, in the new order, greatness was to be measured in terms of love. During his Palestinian travels we see Peter most often coupled with John; during his Roman mission he travels most often with Paul. And John and Paul are known as the apostles of love.

In comparison with them, Peter has this distinction: his love, though enlightened by the highest revelation, is aimed primarily at concrete accomplishments which we might today term "organizational." While his eyes were fixed on God his hands were digging the foundations of the new society. Thus, he translated his love into action; he made it Church — this love of his which, in spite of everything, was the greatest of all.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" the risen Christ asked him. "Lord, you know everything. You know well that I love you," Peter replied.

Because Peter loved Christ more than all the apostles did, Christ confirmed his supremacy over the apostles and all the faithful. Peter had learned from the Master that to love means to serve and that becoming the head of the Church meant, therefore, becoming "the servant of the servants of God." Putting his faith in the Master as he had done on the night of the fish haul, Peter gave his all and set to work with a serious determination that showed him to be the cornerstone of the human and divine order which Christ had established. His work was such that,

While his eyes were raised toward heaven, his feet were planted firmly on the ground. Peter moved toward Christ as if he had wings, although he knew how hard it is for men to move ahead, hampered as they are by their passions and habits.

even today, it is said that Peter is the one who, through his successors, is leading that body which is the Mystical Christ, the Church, and directing its task of perpetuating love in order to redeem humanity.

In the early days of Christianity, the Church was called "agape," love. No one was considered as worthy as Peter of protecting that love, distributing it and personifying it. This explains the basis of the aphorism, "Where there is Peter, there is the Church."

After Jesus departed from the earth, the faithful lived in an atmosphere of terror owing to the crucifixion; yet the community did not disband, because Peter took it in hand. He reassured the weak, replaced the deserters, and fostered a communitarian life around Mary, the Mother of God, who had been put at the heart of the newborn family, the Mystical Christ, on which the Holy Spirit — Eternal Love — was soon to descend. Peter had the courage to oppose and even challenge authority in defense of a principle which decries all political idolatry: "Better for us to obey God than men!" (Acts 5:29)

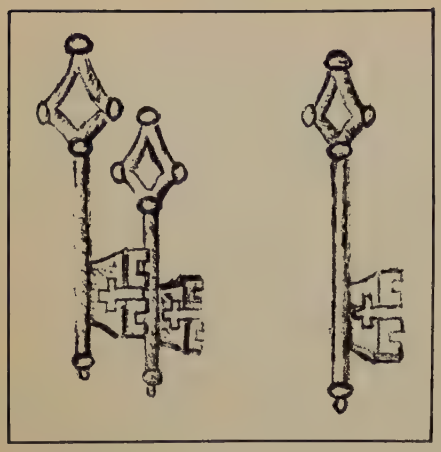
So greatly had the charisms bestowed on them at Pentecost transformed Peter and those who were with him ("Peter and the Eleven" as the evangelist says) and so great was their zeal to change the world with these gifts that they were taken for drunkards.

"You must realize that these men are not drunk, as you seem to think. It is only nine in the morning!" Peter then said with a certain irony. And is a straightforward way he proceeded to call to mind the story of Christ, from the prophecies to Calvary. He moved the hearts of the crowds, calling for repentance, that is to say, for a change. He was asking for a change of heart, and the first fruit of it would be a communion of what is good and of the goods of this earth.

He achieved this communion, which amounted to a victory over man's selfishness and small-mindedness. Among the faithful in Jerusalem, "everything was held in common," as the writer of the Acts of the Apostles has said, ". . . all who owned property or houses sold them and donated the proceeds. They used to lay them at the feet of the apostles to be distributed to everyone according to his need." (Acts 4: 32-35)

In so doing,the early Christians dealt a severe blow to the old structures which were based on an economy of selfishness and in which goods were distributed according to a caste system and racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination also suffered a severe blow. Although Peter



himself was a Jew, and one who observed the laws strictly, he had grasped the universality of the evangelical message and thus broke away from the narrow confines of his origins. As he said in Joppa: "I begin to see how true it is that God shows no partiality. Rather, the man of any nation who fears God and acts uprightly is acceptable to him."

This is what he had learned from Christ who, as he said, "went about doing good works . . . " (Acts 10:38) In these few words, Peter described the life of the Redemptor on which his own life was modeled.

For this reason he "gave orders" that the Gentiles be baptized. Thus, with a courage that is hard for us to imagine, he put an end to the racism which had prohibited any contact with Gentiles.

In the midst of turmoil, he took initiatives, gave orders, preached, preserved the unity of Christians, and worked miracles. He did everything that Jesus had done. It was Jesus living on in him. The Lord's work was in good hands; trust and confidence were being restored.

Peter exhibited the same faith and hard work in Rome, the pompous and powerful metropolis of ancient times — the new Babylon — and there he established and later directed a church so flourishing that St. Paul, writing to the Romans, was prompted to say: "Your faith is heralded throughout the world."

There was an ideal in the life of St. Peter, a name, a beginning and an end: Christ. From the moment that Christ had walked along the Sea of Galilee, caught sight of Peter and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, and said to them: "Come after me and I will make you fishers of men;" from that moment when they "immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers," up to the very end of his life when he was cast into the hands of a tyrant just as nets are cast into the sea, Peter lived like someone who had understood Christ. Only he could have made such a declaration to Christ: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Through Peter who was so closely bound to the common man, Christ, the God-Man continued to live on in the masses of laborers, of everyday people, of families burdened by the need for food and shelter, the masses of people victimized by the wiles of nature and by human arrogance.

Peter knew that Christ is God. Whenever he spoke about him after the crucifixion he re-echoed, amidst tears of sorrow and repentance, the adoration which had come with his first intuition of Christ's identity. Christ was the norm of the new society in which forgiveness cut through the tangled knots of vengeance, and generosity dispelled avarice. Christ is the "just man" who died "for the sake of the unjust;" "When he was insulted, he returned no insult. When he was made to suffer, he did not counter with threats." Therefore, Peter counseled the early Christians, " . . . all of you should be like-minded, sympathetic, loving toward one another, kindly disposed, and humble. Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult. Return a blessing instead. This you have been called to do . . . "

Peter was well aware that new structures would have to be based on this new wisdom which was capable of overthrowing pagan beliefs especially through mutual love. Charity was the testament of Jesus and of his vicar as well. It was the outstanding value for the new economy, and when Simon Magus offered to buy the charisms of the Spirit with money, Peter answered him with indignation: "May you and your money rot . . . Pray that the Lord may pardon you for thinking the way you have."

It is apparent from Peter's disdain for money and his esteem for spiritual values — the values of the new revolution — that he is Christ's true heir.

In the Acts of the Apostles, as in his letters and speeches, this man, who is often depicted with burning eyes, a bearded face, and bushy hair, had his eyes looking up to heaven while his feet were planted firmly on the ground. He moved towards Christ as if he had wings, but he knew how hard it is for men to move ahead, hampered as they are by their passions and habits. He used the law of charity and truth as a norm with which to judge the old world and design the new one. Peter was a leader in the true sense of the word.

In his first letter, he told the early Christians, "By obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a genuine love of your brothers; therefore, love one another constantly from the heart." He went on to tell them of his desire to form "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own . . . " He explained that this meant they were to become "God's people" because up to that time they had not been "a people," but rather a group of individuals, a crowd. Now they were to rise from being a crowd to being a people; from being a people to being Church: a human and divine institution whose order is maintained through a law of submission out of love for God, and authority out of love for humanity, culminating in the precept, "You must esteem the person of every man. Foster love for the brothers reverence for God, respect for the emperor."

(continued on page 28)

by Karl-Heinz Fleckenstein

A general view of the Ottmaring Center as it is today. In the center we see the convention hall and guest quarters. Scattered around it are the houses where Catholic and Lutheran communities and families live, the Chapel, and the office of "Neue Stadt" (New City), a monthly publication of the Focolare Movement.

Ottmaring is ten years old

A small village, a few meeting places, a parking lot, green meadows all around, which on Sundays teem with people: families and children coming from all parts of Germany — this is Ottmaring, a center of ecumenical life. It is a miniature city where the one hundred or so inhabitants want to live in the spirit of the early Christian communities. Some are Catholics belonging to the Focolare Movement, some are Lutherans belonging to the Bruderschaften von Gemeinsamenleben (Brotherhood of Community Life). They form small communities and families with about thirty children. The composition of the little "city" reflects the many aspects of our society. Everybody works. There are architects, teachers, bakers, artists, bank employees and journalists among them.

Ottmaring is not cut off from the surrounding world. One's behavior at work is said to be the best proof of the credibility of the life at Ottmaring. Each person, in fact, has ample opportunity to give evidence of the sincerity of his or her commitment in the difficulties that arise. Tensions and misunderstandings are inevitable things that have to be faced and solved in the light of the scriptures.

Here you cannot get by only with words. What counts is the relationship of mutual love which must always be built anew, day by day, in the countless occasions offered by everyday life like working together on a very demanding job, or just mowing the lawn, or watching the children, or shoveling snow. This can be done if everyone is ready moment by moment to give of oneself without reservation going beyond the confines of one's own family or group.

It is a life committed to bearing witness to the Gospel in the conviction that when Christians of different churches have become "one" in their everyday experience of life, when they have created a solid basis of understanding and mutual love with one another, they will have then created the most suitable conditions toward the achievement of a full unity on

(continued on page 19)

April 2, 1967. A historic moment for the Ottmaring community. Several hundred people from West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland came to attend the ground-breaking ceremony for the Center's construction. The Archbishop of Trent, Bishop Gottardi, underlined the symbolic significance of his presence for the event that was taking place in Ottmaring near Augsburg, recalling that Trent and Augsburg became Christian at the same time in history. Later, it was in Augsburg that Luther's "Augsburg Confession", calling for reform, was proclaimed, whereas Trent was the city that hosted the Council of Trent which counteracted the reform. Trent was also the cradle of the Focolare Movement which, together with the Bruderschaften von Gemeinsamenleben (Brotherhood of Community Life), started this ecumenical endeavor at Ottmaring.

June 22, 1968.. Among the one thousand people attending the inauguration of the Ottmaring Ecumenical Center were leaders of the Catholic Church from Rome, Munich, Regensburg and Augsburg as well as representatives from other Churches — Reformed, Lutheran, Orthodox, and Anglican. Twenty-six persons, including Catholics from the Focolare Movement and Lutherans from the Bruderschaften, settled in four new buildings and made up the first nucleus of the future ecumenical city. At the inauguration, Bishop Marafini from Italy brought a message from Cardinal Bea, then President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. "The more we understand and live the Gospel," Cardinal Bea wrote, "the closer we will get to one another." This was to become the Center's program. Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, said on that occasion, "The life of the Gospel is not a static reality, but something dynamic. It will make of this small center a city placed on the mountaintop." Dr. Schmidt of the Lutheran Church, representing Dr. Dietzfelbinger, then President of the Lutheran Church in Germany, called the event, "a testimony to a joyous yes to Christ."

July 23, 1978. The Ecumenical Center of Ottmaring celebrates its tenth anniversary. Ten years which have shown that a community based on the dynamics of the Gospel overcomes prejudices and indifference. People of different Christian confessions live the same mutual commitment and build bridges, not only on the religious plane, but on the human one as well. (In the photograph, we see among the visitors a group representing the Baptist communities of Munich.) The center organizes ecumenical encounters of various types. An "Ecumenical Week" held at different times gives friends of the Center from all parts of Germany the chance to live together for several days, sharing in this ecumenical experience of life. In this way, many people acquire a greater commitment to their own work for Christian unity. In the summer groups of persons of all ages, representing Catholic and Lutheran parish communities, spend six days together, exchanging experiences and helping one another in living God's word. Those from the Center participate in regional meetings held throughout Germany. Furthermore, various ecumenical evening meetings are held to deepen the commitment to unity in the parishes. Every two years a trip to Rome is organized where the people of Ottmaring spend a week with other Catholics and members of different Christian Churches in the spirit of the early Christians.

May 1, 1976. The inauguration of a new, large convention hall with several smaller meeting halls and two guest houses took place. More homes were also built for the community, which had grown to about one hundred adults and thirty children. Other families, attracted by this experience of life started to build additional homes around the center.

(continued from page 17)

the theological and sacramental level as well.

The Center, inaugurated little more than ten years ago, is the result of a dialogue begun in the early sixties between the Focolare Movement and the Bruderschaften along the guidelines given by Pope John who said, "That which we have in common is more than that which divides us." At first there were meetings held at the Russlikon of Zurich and at the home of the Marienschwestern (Sisters of Mary) of Darmstad. More encounters followed, prompted by the desire to live mutual charity and work toward unity among Christians. The starting point would be to live in such a way as to merit Jesus' presence among those who are united in his name, "Where two or three are united in my name, there I am in the midst of them." The reason for the existence of the Ottmaring Center lies in these words of Jesus. Those who live in Ottmaring are convinced that this unity must be built every day, with each person remaining faithful to his own church.

The Ottmaring experience is part of the great ecumenical current of our times which goes from the pioneering work for unity on the part of many Christians before and immediately after World War II, to the work of the World Council of Churches, to the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church. This work continues today in the numerous encounters of church leaders, in the studies of the theologians and in the ecumenical movements in all Christian churches and communities.

It is within this framework that the Center for Ecumenical Life at Ottmaring finds its meaning. Its aim is to contribute with its testimony of life, to promote among Christians an ever growing commitment to unity: "So that the world may believe." For the many people who come from all over Germany and other countries as well, Ottmaring has truly become a place of renewal and hope.

EIGHT RULES OF LIFE AT THE OTTMARING CENTER

1. To have a full, joyous faith in God's love for humanity: the love of a Father who never forgets us, who guides us and provides for us every day.

2. In response to this love, to direct our whole lives moment by moment to doing his will which includes, first of all, loving our neighbor.

3. To apply the Gospel to every situation, especially by living the "Word of Life," the sentence from the Scriptures selected each month.

4. To give witness through love in accordance with Jesus' commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you."

5. To make every effort to merit the presence of Jesus in our midst, as he promised in the Gospel of Matthew (18:20): "Where two or more are united in my name there am I in the midst of them.

6. To accept suffering, trials and difficulties in our relationships as a way of participating in the life of Jesus Crucified.

7. To commit ourselves to work toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father, "That all may be one." Unity with God and with one another is the primary rule on both the ecclesial and the human plane.

8. To strive for and maintain the greatest unity with one's own church.

Every evening the inhabitants of the Ecumenical Center of Ottmaring gather in the Chapel for prayer, for an exchange of information on the life of their small city and for the sharing of their experiences in living the Gospel. It is the high point of unity for the Center. Once a week there is a gathering for a specific purpose: one evening is devoted to a deepening of spiritual life; another to an up-dating on ecumenical information; a third evening concerns the family groups, following the example of the early Church. At the end of the month all gather in the Ottmaring parish church, joining the village for ecumenical prayer. There is no inter-communion in Ottmaring. Faithfulness to one's own Church is fundamental there. Members are convinced that the very suffering caused by the pain of separation, consciously accepted, will open the way to a deeper and real unity.

by Piero Pasolini

Galaxies in flight

Modern scientific observations lead us to believe we are living in a universe which is expanding in all directions. Further, the majority of scientists studying the universe as a whole (physicists, astronomers, cosmologists) are concluding that the universe had a definite beginning in time and is heading toward a definite end. They suggest this "end" might take the form of a slow expansion into the infinite or there might be a rapid collapse. Cosmology, or the study of the cosmos in its entirety, is receiving more attention today because of the interest in understanding this expansion of the universe.

Our universe is composed mainly of galaxies. During the 1920's, while the distances to various galaxies were being determined, it was discovered that the light from the galaxies was shifted toward the red end of the spectrum and this shift was greater the farther the distance of the galaxies was from the earth.

Only one explanation seemed to adequately explain this increase in redness: the so-called "Doppler effect" applied to light waves. Frequently we observe the analogous effect with sound. When sound is approaching us, as from a whistling train, a jet plane, or a car with its horn blaring — the sound seems to have a higher pitch or frequency as it draws close to us and to have a lower pitch or frequency as it draws farther away. The actual pitch or frequency of sound coming from the object doesn't vary, we hear the raising or lowering in pitch because of the relative motion of the object.

So it is with the light waves from the galaxies. The light coming from them isn't changing in color or frequency the farther they are from us, it is only because they are moving away from us that there is a color change. If a galaxy is traveling away from our galaxy, upon analyzing its light that has passed through a prism, we can see that its spectrum has shifted toward the lower frequencies, that is, toward the red side of the spectrum; just as sound shifts toward the lower frequencies when the object making the sound is moving away from us. We conclude this "red shift" is because the galaxies are in "flight".

The greater the distance of the galaxies from us, the greater is the "red shift". The more distant they are from us, the faster the speed. We can calculate the distance of a galaxy from us by accurately measuring the amount of "red shift". The amount of "red shift". the speed of the galaxy, and its distance from us are related to one another. The American scientist Hubble developed a constant to make possible these calculations, a kind of "cosmological constant" called "Hubble's constant".

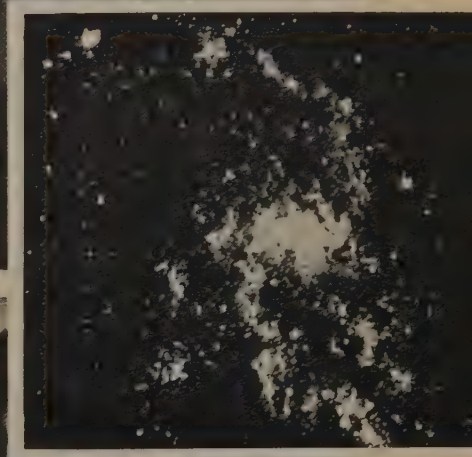
The universe definitely seems to be expanding. Since when? Why the expansion? By applying the Hubble's constant in a reverse manner, one is led to conclude that about 15 billion years ago, matter which has evolved into today's galaxies was then concentrated in a very restricted space, in in a state that is unlike anything seen in the universe today. Even the temperature would have been hundreds of billions of degrees. That distant time may have been the moment of the initial explosion called the "Big Bang", from which today's universe took off. This picture presents a violent beginning for our universe!

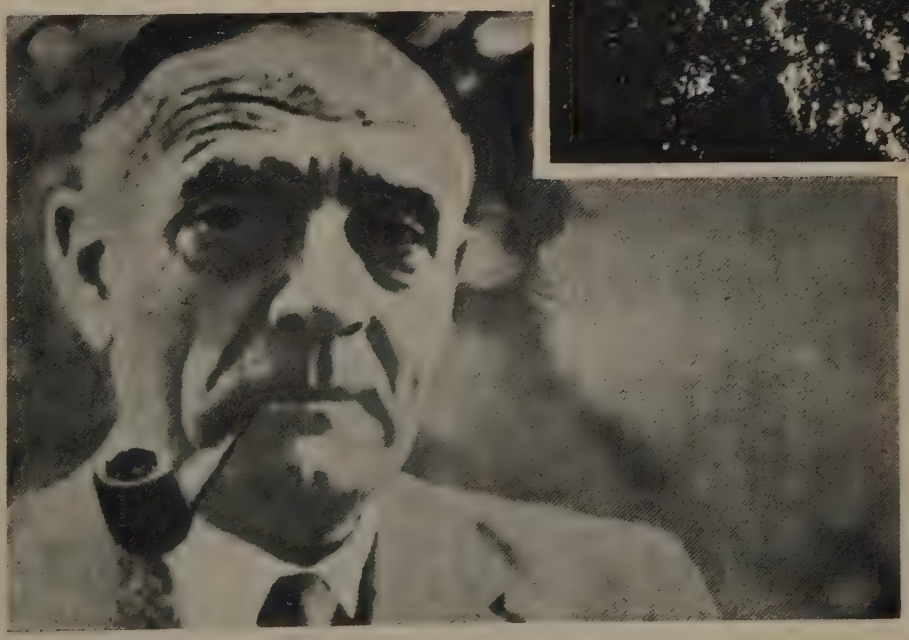
Research in another area supports the "big bang" theory. I will briefly mention attempts to explain the so-called "background radiation" which permeates all space. This thermal radiation which is only 3 degrees above absolute zero is difficult to explain without the "big bang". According to this line of reasoning, this thermal radiation initially filled a restricted space at a very high temperature (before the explosion). After the "big bang" this thermal radiation dispersed through the much larger area and dropped dramatically in temperature to its present temperature of 3 degrees Kelvin. Working back in time using calculations from work in this area of investigation, again we find that the concentrated state of the universe ended about 15 billion years ago.

With today's scientific evidence, it is difficult to deny that the physical universe had a moment of extreme concentration and then an explosion which gave rise to today's expanding universe. If we accept the "big bang" theory, two other questions come to mind. The first one: if the universe had a beginning, what was happening before its super dense condition? The second: if the universe is expanding, where is it going to end up?

Assuming that these two questions make sense, that we can de-

Below: The English astronomer Fred Hoyle. Fred Hoyle and H. Bondi developed the "Steady State Theory of the Universe". Although this theory contains the idea of the expansion of the universe, it avoids the problem of a beginning or end to the universe.
Bottom: Twenty years ago the American astronomer Edwin P. Hubble discovered the expansion of the universe. He was the first to concentrate his studies on the galaxies that are far from ours. He found that the velocity of the galaxies is related to the "red shift", the amount their light is shifted toward the red end of the spectrum.





scribe these situations in an understandable way, the simplest way to reply to them would be to say that the universe is an oscillating and pulsating reality. That is, the universe is in continuous oscillation (repeating about every 40 to 50 billion years) between a concentrated and expanded state. Gravitational and electromagnetic forces are the springs of the oscillation: gravitation pulling the universe into a dense condition and electromagnetic forces causing the expansion.

If our expanding galaxies were to slow down, one would easily believe that within a certain period of time, the force of gravity which attracts each body to the other would completely overcome their initial impetus. Then the bodies would turn around and eventually collide. This total collapse would result in a super concentration of their matter and energy with the gravitational energy converted into thermal electromagnetic energy. This conglomeration, having a temperature of hundreds of billions of degrees would take a split second to explode — another big bang — and there would be a new beginning of expansion.

For this to happen, the average density of the universe's global matter must have a certain critical minimal value, which has been calculated. Otherwise gravity would not be sufficient to slow down the galaxies and there would be an expansion into an infinity of space and time. Many astrophysicists are working on this problem, attempting to calculate with the available

data, whether the average density of matter in the universe is over or under this critical value.

Considering Einstein's Theory of Relativity as it would apply in these extreme conditions, complicates the picture even more. His theory gives a new vision to space and time as being two concepts connected to one another and related to gravity and electromagnetic radiation. Relativity states that gravity slows down time: this fact has been verified in laboratory experiments. Einstein's theory also gives an absolute value to the speed at which electromagnetic radiation, including light, can travel. This value (the so-called "c" velocity of light), is the ultimate velocity. Nothing can beat the speed of light.

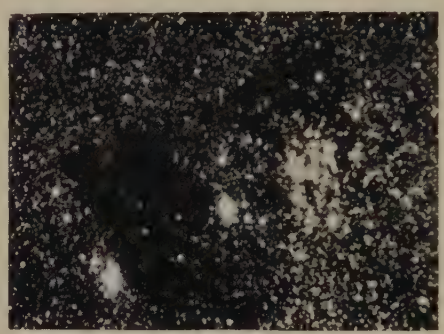
When we are considering questions involving the ultimate conditions of the universe in the superconcentrated state of the beginning, during which gravity would be very strong, it becomes very difficult to discuss time and space. Both would be very distorted under those extreme conditions. Under these conditions our questions hardly make sense.

If the galaxies expand enough with increasing velocity at a certain point their velocities with respect to one another would come close to that of light. It seems that this is on its way to happening. Up to now, it has been possible to see "objects" (quasars) that are distancing themselves from us at a speed of over 133 thousand miles per second (light travels at 200 thousand miles per second).

At this point the Doppler effect would be at its limit. The frequency of light received from these objects would be zero — that is, nothing would be seen. Around each galaxy there would settle a kind of far away shaded horizon which would be unreachable because to reach objects in that area, one would have to go faster than the speed of light, which is impossible. Galaxies beyond the horizon would no longer be visible. This horizon would be one of infinite time and infinite space.

As you see, when dealing with limits such as these, it becomes impossible to scientifically verify any hypotheses trying to expand our knowledge of the universe. Practically speaking therefore, scientific research on the initial and final situation of the physical universe would appear to be impossible. Our means of knowledge are confined to quite a restricted zone of time and space, bordered by a vast shaded area in which these concepts are, so to say, "degenerating".

In fact, from the point of view of epistemology, (which is the theory of the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge), it is



an error to consider the universe as something imaginable and therefore knowable as if our mind could view it "from the outside". As a global reality, the universe cannot be distinct from the observer, even in the ideal, abstract sense. It seems to make sense to consider oneself at its center, within very restricted limits in terms of time, space and nature of things. The universe does not have an "outside". By definition it is to be considered ... "everything". There is a further limitation to scientific knowledge. This could be called a horizon of "quality" or transcendence. The scientist might call it a "metaphysical" horizon, beyond which science cannot go and philosophy takes over. The human spirit is open to going beyond this horizon because its own reality belongs to it, but we must approach this horizon with other means of investigation using metaphysical analysis, and, in the end, religious communication.

The metaphysical side of things is continuously encountered by science, for example, when science attempts to give an interpretation of certain situations revealed by quantum physics and by Relativity. The field of cybernetics, which compares the communication and control systems in animals and machines, contains outstanding examples of this. For example it states: "An organized system is not the sum of its components, nor are its properties the sum of their properties; but it is another thing with its own qualities, its own nature which is new and different, and transcends its components." The meaning of these transcending acts which spring up at each level in the processes of the physical universe, cannot be understood in a scientific way, but by cognitive procedures which go beyond these horizons and enter the field of metaphysics.

At this point we could ask ourselves, "But then, is expansion a real fact or an illusion?" It seems to be a real fact that is verifiable, but its observable reality is restricted within certain limits. The "steady state" theory of the universe explains expansion as a continuous process in which matter is emerging in every point in space under the form of nuclear particles. These would slowly form new galaxies in expansion, compensating for those which continuously are fading beyond the "c" horizon. This theory is not well accepted because of the difficulty in explaining the emergence of the matter in space.

Within certain limits of space and time we can sensibly apply the tools of scientific research in all the sciences. Inevitably one encounters limits, which are our horizons of "knowability" in which the scientific methods no longer are adequate. As I was saying before, to go beyond these horizons could be seen as a metaphysical investigation and even as religious communication. Even the universe could be thought of as something outside ourselves, unlimited in every aspect and dimension, which is not completely "knowable" using the tools of science. ●

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

by Lenny and Mary Szczesniak

Lenny and Mary Szczesniak are both actively involved in the New Family Movement. They have been married for seven years. Lenny works for Hearst Magazines as Assistant Promotion Manager of Good Housekeeping. The Szczesniaks live in Philadelphia with their four children, Mary Chiara (5 years old), Christina, Tina for short, (3 years old), Teresa (2 years old), and Maria Dolores (3 months).

Lenny: I had always wanted to find out more about God — even from the time when I was in Grammar School. I strayed away from him during my high school years, but then at a certain point, when I was in my late teens, I felt a great emptiness within me. I had many things — cars, freedom, a job and a lot of money — but they didn't satisfy me.

Then somebody told me that there was a priest in our area who knew "all the answers to all the problems in the world." This idea fascinated me, so I went and met him. He was conducting C.C.D. classes, but little did I know that at the base of these classes there was the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.

I was attracted to this priest because I could see that he was practicing what I now know to be this spirituality of unity.

Then in 1964 I was invited to attend the first North American Mariapolis[1] and it was there that I became acquainted with other members of the Focolare Movement. The main thing that impressed me at that gathering was the idea that God is Love. Years later, reading the story of the origins of the Movement, I saw that this was also one of the first insights of the first Focolarine.

Mary: I come from a big family in which there was much love. We all tried to live as good Christians. Yet there were frequently times when we were at odds with one another. When I met Lenny and his friends I was intrigued to see these people who were able to overcome many obstacles and remain in an attitude of love with one another.

Lenny: I was very close to the New York Focolare Center and I began going to Philadelphia and Washington to meet with friends of the Movement and help them keep in touch with all the others. When I met Mary here in Philadelphia I was attracted by her and her whole family. I was especially struck by the simplicity I saw in her. Our meeting and subsequent engagement and marriage were a tremendous expression of the love of God for me. It was something totally different from what I had ever expected.

Mary: I remember that when we were engaged Lenny told me that in our marriage there wouldn't have to be any fighting. I couldn't imagine a relationship with anyone in which there weren't disagreements. I tried to explain to him that this was an ideal that would never be reached.

But as I learned more about Lenny and his life, I realized that there could be a relationship among people — between husband and wife or even among friends and acquaintances — in which love could be both mutual and constant and where there wouldn't ever have to be any fighting, bickering or quarrelling. I understood that the secret was to love every suffering and transform it into love, that if we tried to live the Gospel together we would make it.

1) Summer convention of the Focolare Movement.

Lenny: When we got married we were very happy but we were like two children; we really didn't know one another. Now there's a much deeper knowledge and more complete sharing. Our constant effort to maintain mutual love has brought us much closer together.

Mary: I realized that there could be a relationship among people — between husband and wife or even among friends and acquaintances — in which love could be both mutual and constant. I understood that the secret was to love every suffering and transform it into love.

I would say that before we were married I understood many things about my religion but on an intellectual basis rather than on a living basis. I remember that at one point — also during our engagement — Lenny told me that God should always be at the center of our individual lives. Loving Lenny as much as I did, I had to think about that a lot and it took me a while to reach the conclusion that I really did want God to be the center of my life, even though I still loved Lenny as much as I did.

This was sort of a turning point for me, a moment when I began to put all the things I'd understood about the Gospel into my life and really try to live them.

Lenny: A lot of people say, "The first year of married life is the hardest," but our first year together was really beautiful. I guess what helped us very much was the fact that we tried very hard to be united in the sense that Jesus says, that is to be united in his name, so that he would be present among us.[2] Then the children came; we had been together longer and had gotten to know each other better and better. Naturally, there were then some difficulties, but we helped each other to think of God who, by going through the ultimate annihilation of himself on the cross, showed us how to pass through every difficulty. This is what carried us through.

Mary: We made a pact to always see each other new no matter what went wrong or displeased us in the course of the day. We resolved that in the next moment we would see each other completely new, knowing that the other was seeing us as new as well. No matter what mistakes we had made we could go ahead, because the other was not remembering or mulling over the wrong we had done yesterday or this morning.

And we also made a pact that each of us would always be the first to love, or at least try to be the first to love. I think this has helped us a great deal in trying to maintain harmony and the presence of Jesus in our marriage. Because we both make a constant effort to be the first to love, even though individually we don't always succeed, at least one of us is making that effort. When I see Lenny loving it's a reminder to me that I, too, have made that choice to love first. Then I take the step to do it myself, before God, and to start loving the others.

Lenny: For example, maybe I don't like something Mary does. One of the little things that comes to my mind is her leaving the cabinet doors open. I feel that doors that are open and expose a cabinet or closet (you know, closets aren't always in the best order) take the harmony away from a house and so this always irks me.

I remember that one time I even reacted to this a little bit and slammed a cabinet door shut; Mary opened it right up again, because it turned out that she had been working in it. The other day I even closed her in a closet by mistake. I didn't see her in it; I closed it and she was inside. I guess this is one of my little idiosyncracies.

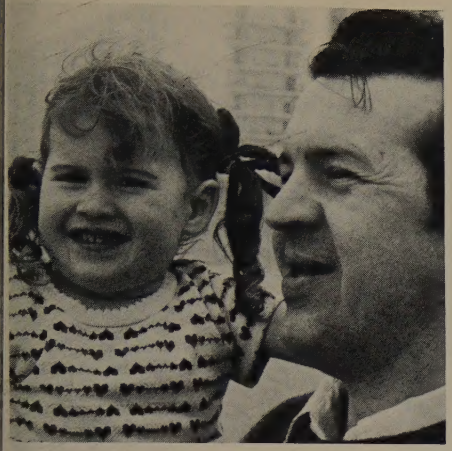
So many times like these I've had to begin all over again, to recreate the atmosphere of unity that we have almost all the time to some degree, just because of a silly thing like a cabinet door or closet being open.

Whenever this happens I feel a little discouraged; I see that there isn't the same tenor in our union — all because of a little thing like that — and then I find that, that emptiness, discouragement or feeling of failure is suffering and I can love it, and in doing so I find my God and tell him that I love him. This doesn't mean that it's any easier to say "I'm sorry" or to show with my actions that what happened before isn't important. It's still just as hard. But thinking of my God who is pure love, I can't do anything but make an act of love myself. So I take a step and try to change the situation.

The other day, to give you another example, Mary was on the telephone talking about something very important, and I was chiding the children about something that they were doing which was really wrong - but I realized however that because I wanted to straighten the children out I was getting upset inside. So I consciously toned down. This really required an act of love for Jesus on my part, because I didn't feel like toning down at that moment.

These are just tiny examples. I have to say that when we got married we were very happy but we were like two children; we really

2) See Mt 18, 20



Lenny: We can't possibly give the children all that we want to give them if they don't see us living it. This is a tremendous responsibility.

Mary: Another thing we stress a lot with the children is to see one another new. At times there's a break in our unity, but the girls understand that although we may have lost unity we can regain it again if we're all ready to start over again.

didn't know one another. Now there's a much deeper knowledge and more complete sharing. Our constant effort to maintain mutual love has brought us much closer together.

Mary: I could also relate two small experiences: After dinner, I'm usually kind of tired from the day with the children. (We have a late dinner because Len doesn't come home until late in the evening.) If I just sit at the table for a few minutes after we've finished eating, Lenny gets up and does the dishes for me. It's often very tempting to just sit there for those few minutes; then, when he gets up to do the dishes I can go and start to do something else that I might like doing a little better than doing the dishes.

But wanting to be the first to love, I sometimes manage to take the step to get up first when dinner's over and start to do the dishes myself. That frees Lenny to be with the children, to make a phone call, or to do something else that needs to be done.

Lenny: I'd like to add one more thing. It seems to me that in the years of our marriage Mary's love has become always more delicate. She often does things knowing that I might never even discover them. Cleaning a closet here or dusting there . . . things that she knows I like, but she never even tells me about them. Often I've discovered them by accident. These acts of love on her part have done a lot to build our relationship.

Mary: We have four children, all girls. I think the only way we can share this life with them is through our example. We believe that if we're loving one another and Jesus is in our midst, the children will feel the presence of God in our family and certainly be affected by the presence of God in their lives.

Lenny: We can't possibly give the children all that we want to give them if they don't see us living it. This is a tremendous responsibility.

On the other hand we are also explicit and even verbal about it: we tell the children what activities we are doing. If we have a New Families' Meeting, in which we share with other families the life we're trying to live, we tell our children about it. So they know about the life we're trying to live. If a particular action of theirs isn't love, we might bring out just what love really is.

Mary: We try to show them how some of their actions which might otherwise just be good gestures can have a much greater significance if they are done out of love for God. We talk to them about keeping God present among us, and also share our own experiences with them.

Lenny: I ask the children how they live the word of life sometimes, and for them it usually comes down to "loving" or "sharing." In their own simple words they often tell experiences which have taken place during the day.

Once, not too long ago, little Teresa shared an experience of how she had eaten her sister's cheese sandwich. Well, initially that didn't sound like it had been love, but it turned out that Tina hadn't wanted her cheese sandwich. Teresa wanted more, but their mother didn't want to make a new sandwich so Teresa ate Tina's sandwich as an act of love for her mother. So, although she just celebrated her second birthday, she already knew how to love in that situation.

We also read the children a lot about the life of Jesus. We've seen that the things which Jesus said and did have meaning in their lives. They often talk about what Jesus "would do," or "wouldn't do," and how they try to do what he "would do" and not do what he "wouldn't do."

Mary: Just recently, when we were living the word of life, "Sell all your possessions and give to the poor . . . " the children decided to go through their toys in order to pick out toys and books and dolls that they could share with a little girl they had heard about who didn't have many toys at all.

Another thing we stress a lot with the children is to see one another new. When the girls and I are home together all day long there are frequently little conflicts. For instance, I'll want the girls to come in out of the rain, or they'll want to stay up a little later . . . At times there's a break in our unity because of these things, but the girls understand that although we may have lost unity we can regain it again if we're all ready to start over again. Often the girls will say to me, "Let's start over again, Mommy. Let's see each other new."

(continued on page 28)

I DO WANT TO BECOME A SAINT!

Mary Chiara (standing). the oldest of the Szczesniak girls.shares with our readers how she and her sisters live as "Gen". Tina occasionaly joins in by adding her side of the story or her experiences.

Mary Chiara: *We are Gen. The Gen are people who love. They want to help God and to become saints. I do want to become a saint. I know about Mary and Saint Anne. The saints love. That is the most important thing. They love even more than other people. I do want to become a saint! I think everyone in my family is a Gen. Me and Tina are Gen because we love.*

Mary Chiara: *I don't know if Teresa tries to be a Gen sometimes, but I hope she does. One time, when Teresa was getting Cheerios, she gave her bag to Tina and got another one. That was love.*

Tina: *Teresa shares with us, sometimes, and that is love.*

Mary Chiara: *I think also Maria Dolores is loving when she laughs when we try to get her to laugh. And sometimes we tell her, "Maria, don't cry." And she stops crying. Maria is gonna learn about love from us (and everybody else, I hope), because when people love her she'll learn to love.*

I think I have a lot of experiences, really a lot, but it is hard to remember any. Most of the experiences are about sharing toys, I think. Tina had one: she shared her copybook with me. I got a copybook and all the pages in mine got used up. So Tina shared her copybook with me.

Tina: *And my pages are used up now too. Now it is all scribbled in and it has a lot of letters in it but I don't mind. I shared it to love God.*

Mary Chiara: *One day when we were riding to the train station I shared a blanket with Tina. We were in the car. I had a blanket and Tina didn't have one. She wanted mine. It was cold out and I gave it to Tina. I did it just to love Tina. God is there when we love one another. Last night when Daddy was putting us to bed he didn't do it right and we started crying. But then Tina went to bed when she didn't want to and I slept in the bed I didn't want to sleep in.*

Tina: *Me and Mary both did it to love.*

Mary Chiara: *I know an experience Tina has and it's talking when she's so shy. Tina is shy to tell her experience and she does it just the same.*

Tina: *I went upstairs and brought downstairs Teresa's pajamas. Mommy only asked me to bring down my own pajamas and I brought Teresa's too. I did it to love God. I know an experience that Mommy had. Mommy buttoned up my dress when I told her to. She did it right away.*

Mary Chiara: *I try to live the word of life too. The one for this month is to keep on trying to love. I keep on trying to get dressed by myself out of love for my Mommy, so she won't have to bother.*

The word of life comes from the Bible. The Bible is not just a book like Peter Pan. It is all true because it is God's own book. One of my favorite stories in the Bible is about when Jesus was born and about his mother. I know her whole life: The angel came to her and then she had Jesus. And she was there when Jesus got put on the cross. And while he was on the cross Jesus said, "John is now Mary's son, and Mary is now John's mother." It means that Mary has a new son now to take the place of Jesus.

The Bible also has other stories in it, and it tells us things like the words of life and the hundredfold. I had an experience about the hundredfold last week. Grandma gave perfume bottles to Teresa and Tina. So I wanted some. But Grandma didn't have any more perfume bottles. So I said, "O.K." But then she found another one for me and it even had a little bit of perfume in it. That was really the hundredfold.

Sometimes I have an experience with my friend Bonnie, cause when we play outside, Bonnie always wants to jump off a railing and I want to take a walk. I tell her, "Well, first I'll jump off a railing." And she says, "Then we'll go down the steps and we'll take a walk." It is an experience that we both did because I jumped off the railing to love her and then she took a walk with me.

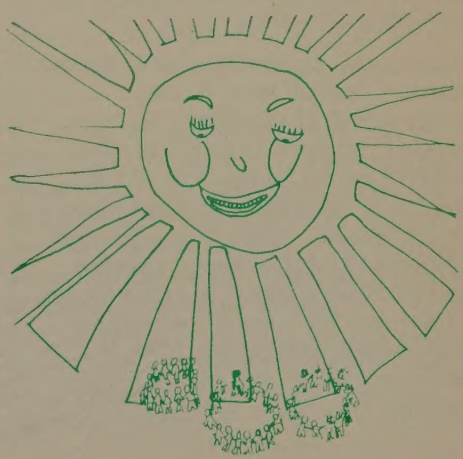
WHEN YOU LOVE WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO THAT'S A SPECIAL KIND OF LOVE.

When you love when you don't want to, that's a special kind of love. It is one of the most special kinds of love. Jesus died for us and that was hard. When Jesus was dying on the cross he said he was thirsty and they gave him a wet rag with vinegar on it. He must have been hot and they made him carry the cross. And the people said, "He took care of others. He saved others, why can't he save himself?"

That must have been hard. He did it for us. He died for us.

Well, it is just about always hard to love. Tina had an experience that I saw: We were going down to the seashore last week and we were riding in the car and Teresa was going to share her fifty cents with my cousin Rosemary, and I was gonna share mine with Lynnann. And Tina didn't want to share her fifty cents with Michael, not even to love him. But then she did. She started again!

And I remember another experience: There was one time when Maria Dolores was born. At first I thought she was going to be a boy maybe. We were going to call her Stephen. And then they said that maybe she would be a girl, but I already have two sisters, and we don't have any boy in the family — except my Daddy. So I didn't want her to be a girl. But she was, and I loved her. I made her a welcome home card. And now we really love her.



FAMILY LIFE

(continued from page 25)

And then we all make a conscious effort to put Jesus in the midst again.

Lenny: We would like to share our family with many others, and whenever possible also the experience of unity made in all these years. It usually happens in a very simple way. For example, a neighbor of ours recently said that she was fascinated by our family. Something about it attracted her, and little by little she and her husband began to take part in our New Family group.

Oftentimes, people are able to share really serious problems related to the unity in their own families with us. It's not that we have all the answers; often we don't have any of the answers except the words of Jesus, "Take up your cross . . . " At times the problems are so deep that we don't even have the words to give them an answer, but we try to love them. And in their rapport with us they find new hope and strength and perhaps a little more joy than they had before.

Mary: Our children help us a lot and do try to love the children of our neighbors in their spontaneous but powerful way.

Lenny: At times it seems that what is accomplished is very little. We keep trying knowing that our family is not an end in itself. Our relationship as husband and wife isn't an end in itself. Both individually and together we've repeated that we want to have God as the center of our lives and to choose him — not our marriage or our children — first . . . "

Mary: And to live for Jesus' great desire "That all may be one . . . " is the desire of our heart. In each present moment I try to do that which I see to be the will of God for me in bringing this great ideal to fulfillment. Sometimes, this just involves the daily family routine and at other times it means helping to prepare for a meeting, making phone calls, contacting people . . . It is my way, my contribution toward this goal, so that someday ". . . all will be one." ●

THE FIRST SOCIAL ENCYCLICAL

(continued from page 16)

This was the first social encyclical, one in which the legislator put himself at the basis of a new social structure in which all people were joined together in an orderly way, each with a human and divine dignity. This went for everyone: Jews and Gentiles; the rich and the poor; those in authority and those subject to it; masters and servants; married and single people; parents and children.

From his pronouncements, we can see that in Peter the Church was introducing a new idea — the most lofty concept of a divine economy. Because of this concept, the Church was considered a revolutionary institution and the estalished order opposed it with all its might. This new order set the autonomy and supremacy of the Spirit against the prevalent political power which (having its origins in idolatry) felt threatened and rebelled.

It was Peter, the man and what he stood for, who held fast against the opposition — first in Jerusalem at grips with the Sanhedrin, and then in Rome, with Caesar. And so it has been for centuries, in the person of Peter's successors who have safeguarded the freedom of the Spirit from the powers of darkness. Where the Church of Peter is opposed there a dictatorship is to be expected.

John and Paul were the ones who gave inspired definitions of love. Peter having received the light of original revelations as well, is seen rather to be completely immersed in his vocation to incarnate that love — to perpetuate the love of Christ and make it live on in works and people — thus hastening the advent of "new heavens and a new earth where, according to his promise, the justice of God will reside."

This is the precise task to which Peter has been called. ●

WHEN THE ROOTS NEED TO GO DOWN DEEPER

(continued from page 9)

So I went to the father and tol him that I had money for th wheelchair. He knew that th money had come from my job and he refused it. "Well, I lov the child, too," I told him, "an I'm very happy to use the mone for that." So I gave him the whol amount in cash. "I trust that yo will buy it and the next Sunda we can go out all together." H was shocked that I trusted hi not to use the money for drinking He had never had so much mone in his hands. His reaction wa "Ask me anything and I will do i for you." "Are you sure abou that?" He nodded affirmatively "I'll ask you only one thing," told him. "Go and reconcile your self with your wife, that is th best thing you can do." With tha his face turned pale. It was th most difficult thing I could hav asked him. He went away withou saying anything. After two o three weeks, he told me that h had returned to his wife. Then met the wife, too. They took th children out of the orphanage, an the family began a new life.

For me, it was to experience that through the strength tha comes from mutual charity a there was among us Gen, this lov which was transforming me, wa also able to transform peopl around me.

During all this time, somethin was happening inside of me. My mentality was changing, my way of loving was changing. Every thing was changing. I felt as if were a plant that was growing, an now the roots needed to go down deeper. I understood now thi yearning I had always had to know what was the "best" way to spen my life: it was God calling me t give my life to him. Now I am living in a "Focolare" in New York. Days are full and God keeps unfolding his plan of love for me, moment by moment, as work with many others at giving my little contribution toward the fullfillment of his last prayer t the Father, "That all may be one."